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The Iowa State College Theater

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Abstract

WHAT is that little round building just west of the Press Building?' "Oh that? Didn't you know? That's the Theater Workshop. That's where our Players rehearse and produce all these swell plays. And by the way, if you feel an urge to help, just walk in...

The Iowa State College Theater

“WHAT is that little round building just west of the Press Building?”

“Oh that? Didn't you know? That's the Theater Workshop. That's where our Players rehearse and produce all these swell plays. And by the way, if you feel an urge to help, just walk in. They'll put you to work at whatever phase of the theater you're most interested in.”

When I first came to Iowa State, I was intrigued by that little round building, and even more so after I found out what it was. I guess there's a little bit of the 'ham' in all of us. There is in me. Enough, anyway, so that I couldn't rest until I'd investigated, and found out how I might get started here in dramatics.

I merely walked right in one day and looked around. Most of the building is taken up by the stage, which is lowered in the center, and a small auditorium seating only 136, but the atmosphere is friendly with the audience assured of seeing and hearing the actors. Through clever decorations, the impression is created of a circus tent, with rope splices hanging down the sides and ceiling ropes meeting at a center chandelier. Along the walls are encribed the names of 29 famous playwrights from the Greek Euripides to the modern English O'Neill.

The Theater was reopened two years ago, after being closed seven years, and has just been redecorated. Professor Maurice A. Hansen, of the Department of Landscape Architecture, designed the plans with the help of Professor Harriet Adams, of the Applied Arts Department. The redecorations are not complete since the money used must come from the profits of the plays produced. In this way, the theater earns its own proud way.

“Who do I see about getting in the Theater Workshop?”

“Either Mr. Joseph North or Mr. Frank Brandt, in the Speech Department.”

The Iowa State Players Group was organized about 35 years ago under the direction of Miss Frederica V. Shattuck, of the Department of English and Speech, making the Players one of the oldest collegiate theater organizations in the United States. Each quarter, the Players produce one three-act play. Since 1946, these productions have been directed by Mr. North and Mr. Brandt. This quarter, they are staging "The Physician in Spite of Himself" by Moliere. Your activity ticket is your admission to these plays, given either in MacKay Auditorium or in Curtiss Hall, to accommodate the crowds.

Since 1946, the Iowa State College Theater has been subdivided into three groups: The Players, The Laboratory Theater, and the Film Society.

"Hadn't you heard? Of course we have foreign films here on campus! Every Wednesday night, in Curtiss Hall."

Currently, the Film Society is featuring films on farm life in foreign countries. Two Russian, two German, and two French movies have been acclaimed so far. Last year was the first experimental year for the Film Society; at that time movies were shown tracing the development of motion pictures from 1895 to 1928.

"But can students themselves gain experience in directing?"

"Certainly! In the Laboratory Theater. A variety of one-act plays are put on each quarter and the directing and production problems are turned over to those demonstrating a special talent."

"What if I don't have a special flare for acting or directing, but would still like to take part in the dramatic productions? Isn't there anything I could do to help?"

"Listen! Props have to be made. Scenery designed. Costumes. Sound-effects. Lighting. Make-up. Ushering . . . and then there's programs to be printed, finances kept accurately . . . CAN you help?"

Last year, over 150 students participated in the Theater here at Iowa State.

You don't have to be a Maurice Evans, I've decided, to find a spot for yourself in the Iowa State College Theater. That solid little round building over on the east side of the campus is here to stay, and during my stay here, I'm going to see more of it!

—Joan Pletch, Sci. Fr.